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ABSTRACT

The Committee on Insular Poverty was charged by the United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) with the responsibility of examining the poor of New York City and the function of human service institutions which are supposed to serve them. Of special concern to the Committee were issues relating to service access and the reported difficulties poor people encountered in their contact with human service providers. The Committee reviewed the experiences of the member agencies of UNH and of the people they serve regarding their dealings with schools, the health care system, and public assistance agencies. The Committee directed its concern to poor families, especially those with children. The Committee concluded that: (1) assistance to poor families must include a strong educational component--sound education at all levels can assist in the upward mobility of poor families; (2) the health care needs of New York City's poor are largely unmet; (3) the City's plan to close or cut back services in hospitals in low income neighborhoods should be scrapped; (4) government reimbursement to health care providers should include people not covered by health insurance; and (5) public assistance allotments should be adjusted automatically to keep pace with increases in the cost of living. Included in this report is a description of the Model Income Maintenance Center which is considered by the Committee to be a laudable public assistance demonstration model. (Author/MK)

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Committee on Insular Poverty

Board of Directors

UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES OF NEW YORK, Inc.

Final Report

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April 1980

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Introduction

United Neighborhood Houses of New York is celebrating its eightieth anniversary. For eighty years our federation of settlement houses and neighborhood centers has been identified with a continuing struggle to improve the living conditions in poor neighborhoods. Working closely with residents of the low-income communities served by UNH's member agencies, the settlement system has promoted a wide variety of programs for neighborhood improvement. Our settlement houses and neighborhood centers have taken pride in the growing involvement of local residents in the development of their communities and in the larger campaigns to improve conditions for the City's poor.

During the years when broad movements for social reform were flourishing, UNH and the neighborhoods it represents fought to bring needed services and opportunities for economic and social advancement to low-income communities. During the periods of social reaction, such as we experienced in the 1970's, UNH continued speaking out on behalf of the City's needy people. With the end of the silent decade of the 1970's, we are compelled to bring forth a "Platform for the Poor." The enduring issues of social justice must be forced into public debate. This election year of 1980 should provide an opportunity for serious consideration of all issues of public policy, and no public issue is of greater importance than the continuing poverty of millions of people in the richest country in the world.

Political candidates and other commentators on public policy who are now steering clear of the problems of America's poor people try to justify themselves by referring to the general mood of the country today. Politicians, in particular, pay close attention to the preferences of potential voters, the great majority of whom are middle-and upper-income. Affluent Americans, distressed by the erosion of their own status by inflation, appear to be in no mood to consider the problems of the poor. Consequently, political candidates seeking approval from the voting majorities in this country frame their platforms with

very little attention to the interests of the largely non-voting poor.

While acknowledging the political realities which are militating against the interests of America's poor, UNH must still defend and press for those interests. The unique men and women who first established settlement houses and the workers in our agencies today are all part of a great tradition of social advocacy. Whether the cause is currently popular or not, we are proud to uphold this tradition. We look for leaders who will not ignore issues of social justice and will speak to the public conscience on these issues.

Out of its concern over the prevailing negative attitudes toward the problems of poor people, the Board of Directors of UNH established a Committee on Insular Poverty. The charge of the Committee was to examine the problems of the most vulnerable segments of our society and the functioning of the human service institutions which are supposed to serve them. Of special concern to the Committee were issues relating to access to services and the reported difficulties poor people encountered in their contact with human service institutions. During the past year, the Committee carefully reviewed the experiences of the member agencies of UNH and of the people they serve in their dealings with the schools, health care system, and public assistance agencies.

In its deliberations, the Committee has been guided by certain basic values. It believes not only in the urgent necessity of measures to bring about social justice but also in the necessity of restoring and preserving family bonds. Families have been defined broadly to include the widest possible variety of mutually supportive and nurturing arrangements. For the Committee, the values of social justice and family bonds are, in fact, complementary. The Committee sees poverty, racism, and unemployment as factors which subject families to the risks of breakup. Similarly, suffering families and people without family supports are seen to be at the greatest risk of experiencing social and economic misfortunes.

Focus on Families

As a symbol of national concern about disturbing social and economic phenomena, "the family question" has become a key topic in general discussions of public policy. The White House Conference on Families, numerous other conferences, and scores of articles and books are addressing the problems of American Families and how public policies can strengthen these most basic institutions of society.

The Committee on Insular Poverty has directed its concern to poor families, particularly those in which there are small children. Having just observed the International Year of the Child, we believe that our "Platform for the Poor" must include a special plea on behalf of poor children. Many of these children have only one parent or other caretaker in their homes. One-third of New York City's children now live in single-parent households. Generally, single-headed households are much poorer than nuclear or extended families. If they are working, single parents in poor neighborhoods may be just one step away from welfare. The struggle to provide for themselves and their children overwhelms many. We cite the case of a man left with a child of a year and a half. This abandoned father, who had been working on a night shift, did not have relatives who could take care of his child while he worked. Homemakers were not available at night. With no other alternative, this single parent had to quit his job and enroll for public assistance. Even for single parents who work daytime hours, supporting their families and also being responsible for the chores and services needed by their children add up to an overwhelming task. The stress on parents in these circumstances is very great.

Family stress can be measured in the incidence of several kinds of malaise, including child abuse and neglect, family breakup, juvenile delinquency, physical disease, and mental illness. The social and economic forces which contribute to family stress are very powerful in contemporary society, and it is difficult to

dampen their effects. If it is acknowledged that family problems mirror the failings of U.S. society, the continuing presence of poverty, discrimination, and unemployment in this country means that families will be subjected to continuing stress.

While these powerful economic and social phenomena continue to batter our neediest families, every effort must be made to insure that public policies and the practices of social welfare institutions are truly supportive of these families. The mission of UNH and its member agencies is to assist individuals and families living in New York City's poor neighborhoods in their fight against the destructive forces of poverty, discrimination, and unemployment. For two young sisters who were scheduled to be left back in their elementary school classes, the help of an interested agency was required to expose their real problems. The little girls were doing poorly in school because of their limited command of English and hearing difficulties resulting from ear infections which had not been properly treated. For an 89-year-old woman who had been homebound for years, the help of an interested agency was required to obtain transportation to a community health center for a medical checkup. The woman's blood pressure was found to be so high that immediate hospitalization was ordered. The agency also arranged for the woman, who had been subsisting on Social Security, to receive the S.S.I. and Medicaid benefits for which she was eligible. For a 31-year-old mother with a history of mental illness, the services of the aftercare clinic sponsored by one of our member agencies have been life-saving. The woman and her husband are "medically disenfranchised" because he is not covered by medical insurance at his job and his income places the family above the Medicaid eligibility level. The private hospital in the neighborhood does not accept patients who do not have medical coverage; our clinic does not turn them away. This family, facing distintegration because of the mother's mental illness, was held together by the efforts of our member agency.

Untold stories like those mentioned above illustrate the chronicle of service performed by UNH and its member agencies in New York City's poor neighborhoods. Drawing on this experience and on our commitment to the pre-eminent values of social justice and family life, we present our "Platform for the Poor." According to the latest estimates of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, some 18.5% (1,312,000 persons) of the population of New York City live below the official poverty level. This figure is currently set at $6,700 a year for a family of four persons. Using this very low figure, official calculations reveal that 288,000 families are living under the poverty level and that nearly 24% of the City's children under the age of eighteen are below the poverty level. Of these children, 37.7% are of Hispanic origin, and 36% are Black. On behalf of all of New York City's poor children and poor families, the Committee has done its work and now speaks out for measures that will improve their lot.

Education

For the children of New York City's poorest families, the path to a better life should begin in the public schools. That so many students drop out of or finish high school with very limited skills means that this path to a better life is not available to large numbers of the City's poor people.

The recent publication of high school dropout figures complied by the Board of Education has resulted in great public alarm. Approximately forty-five per cent of the students entering the ninth grade do not complete high school. Those of us who work in the City's low-income neighborhoods have always known that the school dropout rate was very high.[1] And dropout rates are only part of the picture. Even among those who graduate from high school, the levels of literacy and academic skills are inadequate. Colleges which enroll the City's high school graduates and employers who consider them for employment have been complaining for many years about the products of the school system. Earlier in this century, illiterates and school dropouts were able to find unskilled jobs so that their lack of schooling did not make it impossible for them to earn a living. Today, the number of unskilled jobs is rapidly shrinking, and functional literacy is a minimum requirement for most kinds of employment. Advancing far beyond functional literacy is essential to obtain the more demanding jobs on the economic ladder. Dropouts and illiterate high school graduates face a dim future in today's economy.

New York City's difficulties in educating its youngsters represent but another chapter in the troubled history of public education in the United States. The challenge of providing universal public education of high quality has faced American public schools throughout their history. This challenge has never been met successfully. For the most part, the schools have not been able to educate the neediest children in an effective manner. Handicapped children, children from homes where English is not spoken, and children

from poor families have not received the education available to their more fortunate peers.

Traditionally, handicapped children were kept out of sight and received little or no education or training. Continuing neglect of the handicapped is no longer being accepted by their families. In response to the demands of advocates for the handicapped, Federal law now mandates that every child with a handicapping condition be provided "a free appropriate public education," and States and localities are now struggling to meet this new responsibility.

Until recently, there was also no special effort expended on programs for children from homes in which English was not spoken. Although the bilingual programs now operating have been a source of great controversy, their existence does indicate that the educational needs of children whose dominant tongue is not English require special attention. Among the thousands of immigrants, both with and without proper documents, who come to New York City each year from the Caribbean, South America, and Asia, there are increasing numbers of children. The schools must tailor their instruction to meet the special language needs of these children.

For the large numbers of youngsters whose special educational needs can be ascribed to the socio-economic status of their families, there now exist special programs to enrich regular school offerings. Since the historic passage of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, Title I and other programs of compensatory education have added to the educational offerings available to children coming from deprived communities. Evaluations of compensatory education programs have produced mixed results. Some children are helped; many are not.

Effective educational programs for handicapped, bilingual, and disadvantaged youngsters continue to be elusive goals. Researchers, educators, and public policy-makers will be investigating these subjects and thrashing out possible solutions for many years to come. In the meantime, we should

strengthen those school programs which are working, and for the sake of the young people for whom formal schooling did not work, also support the out-of-school programs which are effective in helping dropouts. Unfortunately, public concern over the problems in our schools has instead led to policies which, in our view, will do more harm than good. Rather than focusing on positive approaches to the problems of educating our neediest children, much of the current debate in New York State has been concentrated on what is, in essence, a punitive approach. "Get tough" policies are poor responses to social problems as complex as those which must be faced in educating the children of New York City's poor families.

Concern over the low achievement levels of public school students in New York City and elsewhere in the State has led the Board of Regents to mandate basic competency requirements for high school graduates. We believe that the minimum competency movement, which has been sweeping the nation, has contributed to an unhealthy preoccupation with testing and measurement in education. Serious educators take care not to let tests become ends in themselves. In the commotion over the Basic Competency Requirements in New York State, an educational significance is being imputed to the tests which they do not merit. We are dismayed to see cramming for and passing these tests being substituted for the real education needed by young people, if they are to cope successfully in today's world. In other states, such as California, Colorado, and Florida, where basic competency testing has been in effect for some time, prospective employers and institutions of higher learning pay little attention to the results of the tests. Employers and higher education officials make their own determinations of whether the applicants can read, write, and work with numbers. In these states there are continuing complaints that high school graduates do not possess basic skills, even though they have passed basic competency tests

in order to graduate from high school.

Not only are minimum competency tests no panacea for curing the ills of a poorly functioning educational system, but they also represent an additional means for stigmatizing students who are having academic difficulties. If the competency tests result in pushing more students out of school without diplomas and thus enlarging the dropout rate in New York City, defense of this new State policy will become increasingly difficult. The demand to "get tough" will have only added to the problems facing the public schools.

Further castigating the public schools for their inability to educate so many of their charges serves no useful purpose. We would rather see public attention turn to the schools, teachers, and community resources that have been working successfully to educate needy children. A good example of this more positive approach is the School Improvement Project. Using the latest research on the factors associated with effective instruction in any school, whether it be located in a low-income neighborhood or in an affluent area, this special demonstration project directs attention to five key factors which are found in successful schools:

1. a strong, resourceful principal;
2. emphasis on fundamental skills in all instructional programs;
3. presence of high expectations for students in all school staff;
4. careful monitoring of individual performance of students;
5. a clean, safe environment.

With public and private funds, the project commenced in September, 1979, and is to operate in thirty schools, including twelve non-public schools.[2] We are hopeful that the project will produce good results in the participating schools. With success, the project should encourage comparable improvements throughout the City's schools. Its approach is positive and incorporates the current consensus on ways to improve the learning environment for children.

Programs operating outside of the school system also have much to contribute to alleviating the problems of school failures. Community-based agencies are often very successful in supplementing or even substituting for the programs of the schools. UNH and its member agencies have been working with the dropout population in a variety of remedial education, training, and employment programs. Many former public school students who gave up on the school system function very well in neighborhood programs, where they work toward a General Equivalency Diploma or enroll in specialized job training.

A key feature of these programs is individual counseling. The cutbacks in guidance staff in the public schools are regrettable because many students and their families are in great need of help in making choices about academic programs. Particularly in the junior high schools, it is essential that students be counseled regarding their educational progress and their options in high school programs.

If basic improvements can be made in the City's public schools, we are hopeful that dropout rates will be lowered and achievement levels will be raised. For many students, a high school diploma marks the end of their formal education, and for these students vocational training in high school may be very important in determining their success in the job market. Like students all over the country, students have been flocking into the City's twenty-two vocational high schools and into the vocational programs in the academic high schools. Notwithstanding the popularity and new respectability of vocational education, there has been much public controversy in New York City over the effectiveness of these programs. Attention has concentrated on whether the training courses have been properly related to current and projected job opportunities.[3] However up-to-date the vocational education programs may be, it will also be important to insure that students in these programs do not sacrifice effort to obtain proficiency in general academic skills to concentrate only on narrow

technical proficiencies. We are fearful that many students may be foreclosing a chance at careers in other sectors of the economy which have higher status and more opportunities for upward mobility. For these careers, academic skills and a college education are requisites. In enrolling themselves in vocational programs, students should not have to lock themselves into single career tracks which may ultimately have to be scrapped.

For some students a high school program emphasizing vocational skills may enable them to make a good livelihood throughout their working years. But most students will need postsecondary education if they are to compete effectively in the job market. For the children of poor families, higher education is an essential mechanism for upward mobility. In New York City the major instrument for the upward mobility of the City's poor residents has been its municipal college system. In the late 1960's the University finally opened its doors wide to the City's Black and Hispanic students, many of whom enrolled in the SEEK and College Discovery programs, which recruited disadvantaged students who would otherwise have not been admitted into CUNY. In 1970 the doors opened even wider because of the "open admissions" policy, which guaranteed a place in the University to every high school graduate in the City.

The blows suffered by the City University since the onset of the City's financial crisis have been very harmful to its most vulnerable students. Since the abandonment of the "open admissions" policy and the imposition of tuition, which is now set at $925 a year for both community college and upper division students, thousands of students have dropped out of the system. The State and Federal financial aid programs have not met the enormous needs of CUNY's students. Especially hard hit have been working students who live apart from their parents. The decision to impose tuition fees on CUNY students was most unfortunate for the many Black and Hispanic students who were just beginning to enter the University in sizable numbers. UNH has lamented each

successive increase in fees which makes ever higher the barrier to educational opportunity for the City's poor residents. We hope that the newly restructured system of financing CUNY, which will place greater responsibility on the State Government, will not mean yearly increases in tuition fees. The increases so far have put higher education out of reach of thousands of New Yorkers who are seeking a path out of poverty.

Plans of assistance to New York City's poorest families must include a strong educational component. If educational programs and services for low-income children and adults are to bring the financial and social return so needed by our City, they must be geared to changing economic and technological realities. Our public schools must produce graduates who have basic skills and can apply these skills to solving the problems of life. Our municipal college system must not abandon its historic function as the major institution for the upward mobility of poor families in New York City.

1. Twenty years ago the State Division for Youth sponsored a study of Harlem students and found that 53% of those entering academic high schools became dropouts and 61% of those who entered vocational high schools never graduated. In the last twenty years, the population of the City's public schools has become increasingly Black and Hispanic. Today the non-Hispanic white student population is under 30% in the City's public schools. The problems in Harlem in 1959 are now the problems of the entire school system in New York City.

2. Under the project, a planning team is being developed in each participating school which will include representatives of all the groups concerned with that school. With the assistance of outside consultants, the teams are planning how to reorganize existing school resources and are searching for supplementary resources. The teams are also concerned with diagnostic testing of children to insure early identification of learning problems. The basic approach of the School Improvement Project has been formulated by Ronald R. Edmonds, formerly of Harvard University and now working at the Board of Education. Edmonds' findings are corroborated in other independent studies made both in the United States and in other countries.

3. The City Comptroller's Office and other observers have charged that the vocational high schools are training students for specialized jobs which do not exist. According to their critics, the schools are locked into old programs, and there is no movement to get rid of the large investment in teaching staff and equipment allocated to these programs.

Health Care

In New York City today, we are facing crisis conditions in the health care available to the residents of poor neighborhoods. Using the City's financial problems as its rationale, the City Administration threatened last year to close four municipal hospitals and also urged that thirteen private hospitals be closed or drastically reduced in size by the State Government. Ths hospitals identified for closing or bed reduction were located in low-income neighborhoods, where most of the residents are Black and Hispanic. The threat of fewer hospitals in these neighborhoods poses imminent dangers to people who are already lacking in adequate health care. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has identified most of these neighborhoods as "medically underserved." According to the HEW formula, a "medically underserved" area is identified by insufficient numbers of general-care physicians, large numbers of aged people and poor residents, and a high infant-mortality rate.

Some 2.3 million New Yorkers reside in "medically underserved" areas. Deficient in ambulatory health care services, these neighborhoods are unable to provide the health care needed by their low-income residents. It is low-income people who have the highest rates of illness and premature death. Rates of illness among the poor are almost four times greater than for the population with higher incomes. Since there is a continuing connection between poverty and race, health statistics also have a racial dimension. Non-Hispanic whites live longer and have a lower incidence of disease than do other groups. For ethnic minorities and low-income groups, adequate health care services cost more than they can afford. Moreover, in seeking primary health care, poor people have fewer options than do the more affluent. Very few family physicians practice in poor neighborhoods, and local residents must turn to hospital out-

patient departments and emergency rooms for ambulatory care. Their use of these facilities is generally episodic, and they do not benefit from regular, preventive health care. Without regular health screening, early diagnosis, and treatment, the health problems of poor people tend to be more severe and require more frequent and longer periods of hospitalization. In addition, illness makes poor people even poorer because of the high costs of medical care as well as the losses in earning power experienced during periods of disability.

Because there are large unmet needs for health care in our most deprived communities, any plan for hospital reorganization in New York City must include proposals to meet those needs first. When New York City's poor neighborhoods are no longer designated as "medically underserved," proposals to cut back hospital services can then be considered in good conscience. In view of the imminent threat which hospital closings pose in poor neighborhoods, UNH called for a thorough revision of the City's Hospital Plan. Drafted in haste and unsupported by a health needs assessment of the City's population, the Plan, in its initial form, was not a proper guide for public policy. It did not encourage constructive debate and, in fact, exacerbated tensions among the City's racial and ethnic groups. We urged the Mayor to scrap the Plan and to begin again the search for more effective hospital services in New York City.

Central to the debate over the Hospital Plan is the general concern about the exorbitant costs of hospital-based health care. UNH does not minimize the importance of the cost factor in health care, and we have serious doubts that hospitals are the best setting for primary health care services. The experience of our settlement houses and neighborhood centers with neighborhood health clinics leads us to call for the expansion of these facilities. These programs generally allow for community participation in their governance. As community programs, they are more responsive to the expressed will of the surrounding neighborhoods than are larger medical facilities run by outside groups.

HEW has pointed out that there is insufficient family-oriented general health care in the U.S., and we think that neighborhood family care centers are excellent means for providing this care. However, until there are sufficient ambulatory care clinics in place, hospitals will continue to serve the needs for primary health care in low-income communities.

Whether low-income people seek health services from hospitals, neighborhood clinics, or local health practitioners, the problem of paying for the care is an overriding issue. Many poor patients do not have medical coverage of any kind. Among the medically disenfranchised are the "working poor," who cannot afford private health insurance and are not eligible for Medicaid, and the growing numbers of undocumented aliens, who live in poor neighborhoods. The municipal hospitals currently are the last resort for the medically indigent who seek health care. In caring for the medically indigent, the municipal hospitals must absorb large financial losses. To relieve the burden on our municipal hospital system, the Federal and State governments should act soon on the problem of the medically disenfranchised. That such large numbers of people are left out of any reimbursement system represents a glaring denial of governmental responsibility for public health. In failing to enact a system of national health insurance, Congress has left many needy people medically disenfranchised. We have long urged enactment of national health insurance and continue to lament the fact that among the industrially developed nations only the United States and South Africa do not have comprehensive health coverage for their people. In the absence of an equitable and comprehensive plan, it is urgent that Congress at least make available special grants or regular reimbursement to health providers for the treatment of undocumented aliens and other low-income people who are not covered by health insurance.

In reworking the reimbursement system for health care and in any general restructuring of our health systems, we urge that the needs of society's most vulnerable people be given full attention. That our poorest people should be left unprotected in their struggle against disease, disability, and untimely death should bring the deepest shame to the more fortunate members of our society. For eighty years UNH has fought to remove the social injustice which has shamed our society. We continue to fight for the principle that all people have the right to health protection.

Income Support Programs

For families who do not have regular income which covers the basic necessities of life, programs of public assistance are a last resort for survival. In New York City, children constitute the majority of individuals on the public assistance rolls. One out of every four children in our City is supported by public assistance. For the sake of these many needy children as well as those adults who are unable to provide for themselves, public assistance programs must be supported at levels adequate to maintain the health and well-being of recipients.

In spite of the antagonistic attitude on the part of much of the general public toward public assistance programs, advocates for the poor have been urging increases in the welfare grants in New York State. Not since 1974 has the State increased the basic grant, whose purchasing power has been drastically cut by inflationary increases in the cost of basic household necessities. Not only is it inhuman to deny disadvantaged New Yorkers a decent standard of living, but it is also more costly to the public treasury in the long run. Economic analyses have revealed that when public assistance recipients do not have enough to live on, they make increased demands on other programs of social assistance. Children living in families receiving inadequate public assistance suffer from poor nutrition and become ill very frequently. Because of illness, these children miss more days of school[1] and fall behind in their studies. Their parents also experience greater breakdown in physical or mental health, which may lead to the necessity of foster care for their children, among other things. New York City's Special Services for Children has reported that two-thirds of the children in foster care come from families receiving public assistance. The economic and social costs of making families and children live below subsistence levels are enormous. We urge that there be automatic cost-of-living

adjustments in public assistance allotments.

In addition to the inadequacy of the welfare grant, the problems of recipients of public assistance have been compounded by their negative encounters with the welfare system. Time-consuming administrative difficulties and mistreatment of clients are characteristic of the operations of the City's Income Maintenance Centers. Countless reports from our member agencies describe the hardships and indignities suffered by individuals who must deal with the welfare system. Because of our firsthand knowledge of the way the system is currently operating, we encourage efforts to make improvements and commend two current developments which promise beneficial changes in the system.

The first positive development is the City's response to the Mendoza suit. The case, a class action against the New York City Department of Social Services, charged that the Department discriminated against Hispanic clients because it did not have enough bilingual workers or forms written in Spanish. Large numbers of New Yorkers are affected by the alleged discrimination, and the numbers are growing, as the City's Hispanic population, much of which is low-income, increases each year. Some 35% of the families currently receiving public assistance in New York City have been identified as Hispanic in origin, and of this number 57.7% of the heads of household are said to be of non or limited English-speaking ability. The City's first corrective measure was to add fifty bilingual program workers, funded by CETA, to the staffs of the Income Maintenance Centers which have large numbers of Spanish-speaking clients. The Department is now hiring additional bilingual staff in its first hiring of Income Maintenance Specialists in several years. The City is also developing a bilingual application for its public assistance programs and will arrange for other relevant documents to be translated into Spanish.

A second noteworthy effort to improve New York City's welfare system is the Model Income Maintenance Center, which has been established in Bushwick, Brooklyn.

Ever since the income maintenance and social service functions were separated from each other in the early 1970's, there have been complaints about the results of the separation. In arguing for the separation, critics of the previous system said that social workers, who then were responsible for both functions, should not have been spending their time in preparing the budgets and cash assistance plans of the welfare clients. In turning over the income maintenance duties to workers who did not have social work training, it was expected that savings in employee salaries would also be realized. Upon implementation of the new system, it soon became clear that many of the workers assigned to income maintenance were insufficiently trained and that clients were being served by different workers on each visit to the income maintenance center. This faulty implementation of the new system resulted in great confusion, wasted time, and very poor service to clients.

With funding from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Model Center has been installed in a relatively small income maintenance center at 30 Thornton Street in Brooklyn. The goals of the project are: (1) reduced errors in case processing and (2) reduction in dependency. To achieve the goal of reduced dependency, the demonstration project places special attention on providing opportunities for vocational training and career development to public assistance clients.*

If the demonstration project lives up to the hopes of its designers, the approach developed in the Bushwick Model Center can be adopted throughout the welfare system of New York City. Wide-scale implementation of a positive approach to the problems of the public assistance population will be a welcome event. For too long the plight of the City's poorest families has been made worse by arbitrary changes in policies and procedures which were instituted to reduce the welfare caseload as rapidly as possible.

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* See Appendix I for a description of the project.

UNH applauds the Model Center's commitment to providing employment opportunities as the major means of reducing the City's welfare caseload. UNH shares this commitment to providing jobs and training opportunities for the poor, and we are currently implementing a variety of employment and training programs for youth and adults. From the perspective of the communities served by the member agencies of UNH as well as from the national point of view, unemployment is a pernicious condition. Clear correlations can be made between high levels of unemployment and indices of social malaise, such as increased crime, family dissolution, child abuse, and greater incidence of disease, illness, and premature death. If successful, the approach being developed in the Bushwick Model Center should give direction to a City-wide effort to assist needy adults and children in their difficult struggle out of the misery of unemployment and welfare.

Note: 1. Losses in pupil attendance days also result in reduced State funds for the City's schools. The current funding formula is based on student attendance, not student enrollment.

APPENDIX I

Bushwick Model Center

To reduce the number of errors in the processing of income maintenance applications and claims, the Human Resources Administration has proposed changed procedures, which have been developed after a careful analysis of recurring patterns of errors. The error studies reveal, for example, that errors in rejected applications generally result because applicants have not had enough time to produce the verification and documentation required to determine their eligibility. Another procedural change which should reduce errors and provide continuity in the handling of claims involves an attempt to group and assign cases to the same intake workers.

After the initial intake interview with the Income Maintenance Staff, all new applicants at the Center have a general interview with staff from the General Social Services unit to determine their needs for service. For the special services of the demonstration project, the target population includes adults 35 years old and under and children 12 years old and under. Other new clients are referred to nearby GSS units.

The special services offered by the program specialists in the GSS unit of the Model Center include assistance in housing and family management, child and maternal health, vocational guidance, and education. The first step is to assess the family's needs and to develop a family service plan, which will guide all the activities undertaken on behalf of the clients. The program specialists will be responsible for insuring that all clients needing specific services are referred to appropriate agencies and for liaison with the service providers. In each area of activity, a service "compact" or "work agreement" must be negotiated between Center staff and the outside agency which is to provide services. The agreements provide the details and time frames for the services to be delivered. This approach is similar to that developed by the Lower East Side Family Union, which has worked for several years as a case management and advocacy agency on behalf of families and children at risk of foster care placement.

For the adult clients who are able to work, the Employment Specialist will make job referrals and will monitor the job placements for periods up to one year. While avoiding a heavy-handed approach to getting public assistance recipients off welfare and forcing them to work, the Model Center places strong emphasis on assisting its clients to become self-sufficient by means of gainful employment. A fundamental assumption upon which the project rests is that poor people, if they are able, want to work. According to this line of reasoning, which UNH fully supports, if poor people do not work, it is because of the lack of job opportunities and/or deficiencies in marketable skills, not because of an inherent dislike of working, as current myths may suggest. In searching for appropriate job placements, the Employment Specialist will make strong efforts to identify positions which have a meaningful training component. Once the clients begin work, their placements are monitored so that any problems which might interfere with a successful work experience can be identified early and corrective measures can be taken.

For the children covered by the project, the goal is early intervention to deal with problems which might cripple their development and make it difficult for them to become self-sufficient adults. Considerable attention will

focus on the academic development of the children. The Education Specialist will meet with officials from the local schools and draw up "compacts" for the regular assessment of the progress of the children.

In a climate where cost containment and quantifiable results are prevailing themes of public welfare policy, the designers of the Model Center have taken care to insure that the evaluation of the project is guided by these criteria. The evaluation of the service component of the project, which will be conducted by an independent consulting group, will gather data on changes in employment and/or earned income, changes in public assistance grants and special grant issuances, and case closings and reopenings. The experience of the Model Center will be compared to that of a traditional income maintenance center of the same size and caseload, which will serve as the control group for the evaluation.

Platform for the Poor

For almost a century the work of settlement houses in New York City has been dedicated to providing services to and serving as advocate on behalf of the City's poor. In 1980, the eightieth anniversary year of UNH, the federation of settlement houses and neighborhood centers in New York City, this work is continuing. Poverty, discrimination, and blighted hopes continue to be the burden borne by many of the City's residents. While the faces and cultures of New York city's needy have changed since the turn of the century, the fact that a great city contains large numbers of very poor people has not changed. UNH is dedicated to changing this sad fact and offers below a program of action to accomplish this goal.

A. Families

1. statement of broad national policy designed to strengthen families
2. expansion of child care programs and other supportive services for working parents, especially single parents
3. public subsidies to relatives who serve as child caretakers
4. appropriate preventive services for families with children "at risk" of placement in foster care, with the health and well-being of the children as the only determining factors in decisions about placement
5. services to "at risk" families accessible in local neighborhoods and reflective of local conditions and preferences

B. Education: K-12

1. expansion of guidance and counselling services
2. adoption of methods of special education in educating all children, which place emphasis on:
   a. clear definition of goals for academic and personal growth
   b. achievement of educational goals by means of individualized programs for each student, based on uniqueness of each child and implemented at his/her own pace

B. Education: K-12 (cont.)

c. emphasis on trust and high expectations

d. parental involvement in education of children, particularly through community programs, such as those sponsored by settlement houses

e. attention to total environment influencing students

3. expansion of work-study programs

C. Education: Postsecondary

1. rededication of CUNY to historic mission as key institution for upward mobility of City's poor residents

2. expansion of programs for articulation with high schools and for community outreach

D. Health

1. comprehensive health insurance for everyone

2. expansion of primary health care facilities and providers in low-income neighborhoods

3. increased emphasis on diagnosis and preventive medicine

E. Income Support

1. automatic cost-of-living adjustments in public assistance grants

2. improved administration of public assistance programs, including rejoining of Income Maintenance and Social Service functions

3. full implementation of Mendoza procedures for clients with limited facility in English

4. expanded vocational training and career development opportunities for public assistance clients